

El Salvador

Summary

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1980-1992: The US backs the Salvadorian junta's power grab and subsequent reign of terror with massive military aid and training.

El Salvador's dissidents tried to work within the system. But with U.S. support, the government made that impossible, using repeated electoral fraud and murdering hundreds of protesters and strikers. In 1980, the dissidents took to the gun, and civil war.

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1980-1992:

The US backs the Salvadorian junta's power grab and subsequent reign of terror with massive military aid and training, and without dealing at any point with the underlying causes of the violence. El Salvador becomes a top recipient of US aid globally as death squad activity proliferates. There are numbers of political assassinations, including the deaths of American aid workers, and between 1978-1981 some 35,000 civilians are murdered. One of the most heinous military organizations was the Atlacatl Battalion. By the end of the civil war in 1992 this number rises to 75,000, with over a quarter of the population internally displaced or in other countries as refugees, the total figure for US military aid is \$6 billion.

Claims of Soviet interference and backing for the FMLN were short on evidence and tall on tales.

"People are not just killed by death squads in El Salvador; they are decapitated and then their heads are placed on pikes and used to dot the landscape. Men are not just disemboweled by the Salvadoran Treasury Police; their severed genitalia are stuffed into their mouths. Salvadoran women are not just raped by the National Guard; their wombs are cut from their bodies and used to cover their faces. It is not enough to kill children; they are dragged over barbed wire until the flesh falls from their bones while parents are forced to watch. The aesthetics of terror in El Salvador is religious."

--Father Daniel Santiago

[1]

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Officially, the U.S. military presence in El Salvador was limited to an advisory capacity. In actuality, military and CIA personnel played a more active role on a continuous basis. About 20 Americans were killed or wounded in helicopter and plane crashes while flying reconnaissance or other missions over combat areas, and considerable evidence surfaced of a U.S. role in the ground fighting as well. The war came to an official end in 1992; 75,000 civilian deaths and the U.S. Treasury depleted by six billion dollars. Meaningful social change has been largely thwarted. A handful of the wealthy still own the country, the poor remain as ever, and dissidents still have to fear right-wing death squads. [2]